ciples for making use of it, a vast stride would be made in the right direction.

The system of architectural education followed in France is very superior to that pursued in this country. Here, the young architect is apprenticed to an architect in practice as to a trade, and is engaged for five or seven years on the works of his master: he gains thereby a good knowledge of construction and of the business of an architect, but has but little opportunity of studying architecture as a fine art. In France, on the contrary, there are, besides the drawing-schools which exist in every town, where the young may obtain much elementary knowledge, many studios (in Paris) where professors devote their time to the instruction of a large number of pupils, making them thoroughly acquainted with the works of every period, and giving them a thorough knowledge both of architecture as a fine art and of construction in theory.

The pupils of these various studios are mostly attendants at the Architectural Academy, where they once a month produce designs in competition for a given subject, and they are assisted in the formation of these by their professor. One consequence resulting from this system is, that we see in France at any given period a much greater unity in the character of their works; and there is not that disorder and waste of forces which we see in this country, where each architect is pulling in a different direction.

Works executed in France have a family resemblance not to be found in those of this country: the influence of the professor is much more felt; and schools of architecture are thereby formed, much as were the ancient schools of painting.

All these architectural students do not become architects: those who do so, when they have finished their studies, become clerks of the works under Government architects, where they learn the practice of their profession, and ultimately practise on their own account. Many of those who have not been sufficiently advanced, or who want Government influence to be so placed, turn to other professions connected with architecture,—become decorators and designers for manufactures. It is this cause which gives to the designs of France the superiority they have. Mostly all their designers have had an architectural education. I do not mean to say that the French have made much more progress towards the formation of a national style than we have: what they have done is, that, at any one period they have carried out the reproduction of any extinct style with much more unity. The fashion, as long as it lasted, has been general; and we do not see in France, as we see here every day, the building of one style of architecture, the decorations of another, and the furniture of a third, with every variety of age and period. However, it is the kind of education pursued in France which I think it would be useful if our Government could be prevailed upon to foster. The Schools of Design have not hitherto produced any marked improvement in the designs of our manufacturers, and have been conducted as if it were the intention only to make painters. The study of the human figure has been carried to excess, and much labour wasted upon it: useful as it is for refining the taste and teaching accurate observation, yet it is a roundabout way of learning to draw for the designer for manufactures. I may here remind you, that the Eastern nations, who appear to excel all others in their works of ornamentation, are forbidden by their creed to make any representation of the human figure; and it is, probably, to this cause that we may attribute their excellence in ornament.

I cannot but feel, that if the education of the Government Schools were made more architectural much real benefit would result to this country: besides that the study of architectural forms must be the best preparation for the designer of ornament, they would do more good in helping to make architects than painters, to whom individuality is less an evil. Architects should be educated in masses, because it is their duty to give expression to common wants and common feelings. The opposite system has been in use in this country, and has most assuredly failed. The knowledge we have acquired of the works of past ages has been procured by individual efforts, but unfortunately with but small results. Each has been tempted to exaggerate the importance of the style of his predilection, and which he undertook to illustrate.

That a little knowledge is a dangerous thing has proved most true in architecture and its attendant arts.

As each new architectural publication appears, it immediately generates a mania for that particular style. When Stuart and Revett returned from Athens, and published their work on Greece, it generated a mania for Greek architecture from which we are barely yet recovered. Taylor and Cresy did as much for the architecture of Rome. The travels of Belzoni and his successors produced the Egyptian-hall, and even Egyptian-faced railway tunnels. The celebrated French work on the architecture of Tuscany, and "Letarouilly's Modern Rome," have more recently inspired us with a desire for Italian palaces.

The works of the elder Pugin and Britton, with a host of followers, have flooded the country with Gothic buildings; with which, notwithstanding the learning and research they exhibit, I must frankly avow I have but little sympathy. I admire and appreciate the Gothic buildings, which were the expression of the feelings of the age in which they were created; but I mourn over the loss which this age has suffered, and still continues to suffer, by so many fine minds devoting all their talents to the reproduction of a galvanised corpse.

Instead of exhausting themselves in the vain attempt, who will dare say that had these same men of genius, as they certainly are, directed their steps forward instead of backward, architecture would have not made some progress towards becoming, as is its office, the true expression of the wants, the faculties, and the sentiments of the age in which we live?

Could the new wants to be supplied, the new materials at command, the new sentiments to be expressed, find no echo to their admonitions? Alas! iron has been forged in vain,—the teachings of science disregarded,—the voice of the poet has fallen upon ears like those of the deaf adder, which move not, charm the musician ever so wisely.

More than this, instead of new materials and processes suggesting to the artist new forms, more in harmony with them, he has moulded them to his own will, and made them, so to speak, accomplices of his crime. The tracery of Gothic windows, generated by the mason's art, have been reproduced in cast iron: the Doric columns of Greek temples, which owe their peculiar form and bulk to the necessities of stone, have been a hollow iron sham.

We have gone on from bad to worse: from the Gothic mania we fell into the Elizabethan,—a malady, fortunately, of shorter duration; for we then even worshipped not only a dead body, but a corrupt one.

We have had an Italian mania without an Italian sky; and we are even now threatened with the importation of a Renaissance mania from France. It would be most unfortunate if the attention which has been directed to the peculiar beauties of the East Indian collection of the Great Exhibition should result in an Indian mania; but if this disease, like measles, must come, the sooner it comes and goes the better. What we want to be convinced of is, that there is good mixed with evil in all these styles; and I trust, when each has strutted its brief hour on the stage, recording for posterity the prevailing affectation of the day, we shall. We want to be convinced that all these styles do but express the same eternal truth, but in a different language: let us retain the ideas, but discard the language in which they are expressed, and endeavour to employ our own for the same purpose. We have no more business to clothe ourselves in mediæval garments, than to shut ourselves in cloisters and talk Latin; to wrap ourselves in Indian robes than to sit all day on divans, leading a life of voluptuous contemplation.

After the expression of so much heresy, I must beg to say that the fault does not at all lie with the architectural profession, to which I esteem it an honour to belong. The fault lies with the public: the public must educate themselves on this question. Architects, unfortunately, can but obey their clients: this one will have an Elizabethan mansion: this clergyman can admit no other than a mediæval church: this club of gentlemen must be accommodated in an Italian palace: this mechanics' institute committee must be located in a Greek temple, for there alone wisdom can be found or philosophy taught: this railway director has a fancy for Moorish tunnels or Doric termini; this company, again, an Egyptian suspension-bridge—the happy union of the alpha and the omega of science: the retired merchant must spend his surplus in Chinese follies and pagodas. And, to wind up the list of these melancholy reproductions, I will cite the worst I ever saw, though, fortunately, not an English one. We have here a client, who, requiring a steam-engine for the purposes of irrigation for his garden, caused his architect to build an engine-house in facsimile of one of the beautiful mosque tombs of the caliphs of Cairo. The minaret was the chimney-shaft. Nothing was omitted: even the beautiful galleries, which you all know were used for the purpose of calling the Moslem to his prayers, here surrounded a chimney without a means of access.

I again repeat, the fault lies with the public: an ignorant public will make complaisant and indolent architects. Manufacturers, again, will always tell you, in answer to a reproach for the bad designs they produce, that they are only what the public require, and will have: let us trust that this excuse will no longer avail them. The Great Exhibition has opened the eyes of the British public to our deficiencies in art: although they were unable to suggest better things, they were found quite able to appreciate them when put before them. There must be on the part of manufacturers, architects, artists, and all who in any way minister to the wants and luxuries of life, a long pull and a strong pull, and a pull altogether: they have, one and all, like dramatic authors, written down to the taste of the audience, instead of trying to elevate it. The public, on the other hand, must do their part, and exercise a little pressure from without.

I know that I shall be told that the production of a new style of architecture is not so easy a matter; that it has never been the work of any one man, or set of men, but rather something in the shape of a revelation, for which, probably, we may be told to wait. Much of what I have said here will be set down as the ravings of folly. Some will say, Architecture is a thing of five orders, discovered and perfected once for all, beyond which we cannot go, and all that is left us is an adaptation of it to our own wants: others will tell you that a Christian people should have no other than Christian architecture, and will tell us to go back to the thirteenth century in search of architecture, and beyond this there is no salvation; but I answer that this architecture is dead and gone: it has passed through its several periods of faith, prosperity, and decay; and had it not been so, the Reformation, which separated the tie which ever existed between Religion and Art, gave to Christian architecture its death-blow.

To show how new styles are really formed, I will here give you an instance of the progression of an architectural idea.

The ornament known as the egg-and-tongue moulding, so common in Roman architecture, which we produce over and over again to such an extent that there is hardly a building or house erected where it is not used externally and internally,—let us see what the Arabs did with it: let us see if they were content to consider it as perfection, and to set themselves down before it with folded arms to worship it.

When the Mahometan religion and civilisation rose with such astonishing rapidity in the East, the Arabs, in their early mosques, made use of the materials which they found ready to their hands in the ruins of old Roman

To learn more about OCR and PDF Compression go to our website